

# UNISIG APPLICATION

## 64 - Volusia



Mr. James T. Russell, Superintendent

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## Purpose and Outline of the UniSIG Proposal

Under section 1003 of Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act, Public Law No. 114-95, each state educational agency (SEAs) shall reserve funds for school improvement, no less than 95 percent of which shall be used to make grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) on a formula or competitive basis, to serve schools implementing comprehensive support and improvement activities or targeted support and improvement activities under section 1111(d).

For 2017-18, Unified School Improvement Grants (UniSIG) will be awarded on a formula basis. Eligible applicants are local educational agencies (LEAs) with funded Title I schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement, as well as LEAs with high schools, Title I or non-Title I, that have a four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate of 67 percent or less, regardless of the school grade earned.

### Part I: Eligibility and Program Requirements

The district reviews the list of eligible schools and allocations and ensures the requirements of UniSIG are met by providing assurances and summaries as applicable.

### Part II: Needs Assessment

For each eligible school, the district demonstrates it has completed a thorough analysis of state-, district-, and school-level data (qualitative and quantitative) in order to identify points of strength and opportunities for growth to inform strategic goal formulation.

### Part III: District Problem Solving

The district documents one or more strategic goals for improving the identified schools, anticipates barriers to the goals, identifies strategies to reduce or eliminate the barriers, and creates an implementation plan for each strategy to include both action steps and monitoring activities.

### Part IV: Budget

The district incorporates a budget that indicates the amount of UniSIG funds the district will use in each eligible school. Each budget line item, except indirect costs, is directly tied to an action step identified in Part III.

## LEA Eligibility and Program Requirements

### Eligible LEA and Allocations

### LEA Assurances

#### **Request for Applications**

We have read the Request for Applications (RFA) in its entirety and understand the intent and requirements of the Unified School Improvement Grant (UniSIG) program.

YES

#### **General Terms, Assurances, and Conditions**

We understand the LEA must have a signed statement by the agency head certifying applicant adherence to FDOE's General Terms, Assurances, and Conditions for Participation in Federal and State Programs.

YES

#### **Risk Analysis**

We understand the LEA must have a Risk Analysis (DOE 610) on file with the Florida Department of Education in order to apply for UniSIG.

YES

#### **Supplement, not Supplant**

We understand that each school the LEA will serve must receive all of the state and local funds it would have received in the absence of UniSIG funds.

YES

#### **Allocation to Schools**

We understand the LEA must allocate 100 percent of funds (less indirect costs) generated under UniSIG to the eligible schools.

YES

#### **Alignment of Strategies**

We understand strategies to be implemented under this program must be aligned with Florida's State Board of Education Strategic Plan.

YES

#### **Alignment of School Improvement Plans (SIP)**

We understand each strategy to be funded under this program must be identified as an **Activity** (within the Standard SIP) or an **Area of Focus** (within the Pilot SIP), with associated budget lines for each school to be served.

YES

#### **Greatest Need**

We understand programs, activities, or strategies to be implemented must specifically address the academic achievement of schools and students that demonstrate the greatest need.

YES

**Instructional Programs**

We understand evidence-based instructional programs must be implemented.

YES

**Extended Learning Time**

We understand that extended learning time activities required of an elementary school designated as one of Florida's lowest performing must not be funded through UniSIG.

YES

**Deliverables and Monitoring**

We understand deliverables will be monitored quarterly by the LEA for each school site funded through UniSIG. The LEA must monitor deliverables and be prepared to submit them to the Bureau of School Improvement (BSI) upon request. BSI reserves the right to do desktop or on-site monitoring of each school site and LEA.

YES

## Supports for School Improvement

**Improvement Planning**

Describe how the LEA will support each school identified as comprehensive support and improvement (CS&I) and/or targeted support and improvement (TS&I) in developing and implementing a school improvement plan (SIP).

The district has created a district-based leadership team that includes the Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, Area Superintendents, K-12 Curriculum Executive Director, ESE Director, Federal Programs Director, Assistant Director of Digital Learning and Assessment, Curriculum Specialists, Professional Learning & School Improvement Specialists, Behavior Specialists, Chief Human Resources Officer, Chief Financial Officer, General Counsel, Professional Learning & School Improvement Coordinator, ELL Coordinator, and Gifted Services Coordinator.

In preparation to support our schools of highest need, in June the district held a School Leadership Team (SLT) event to partner with schools to review and analyze data, as well as to make recommendations for school improvement. Administrators, coaches, key faculty members, as well as district leadership came together to analyze data and design a response. Data from school climate surveys and state and local assessments were used as a springboard for discussion of recommendations.

In addition, the district has an Area Superintendent of Transformation to whom the principals of Comprehensive and Targeted schools directly report. Through collaboration between the Superintendent and members of Cabinet, decisions are made regarding school leadership team members. The Area Superintendent of Transformation directs the Lead Liaison and Curriculum Specialists to increase support to the principal for master scheduling, intervention scheduling, instructional coach use, professional learning, and aligned classroom monitoring.

Throughout the year School Improvement Plans are monitored with the help of district liaisons supporting School Leadership Teams. In addition, principals report to the Cabinet and Superintendent about their progress at key intervals, so that support can be provided as indicated by data and request.

## **Alignment of Resources**

Describe the process through which the LEA identifies and aligns all district resources (e.g., personnel, instructional, curricular, policy) in order to meet the needs of all students and maximize desired student outcomes. Include the methodology for coordinating and supplementing federal, state and local funds, services and programs to align to interventions in comprehensive support and improvement (CS&I) and targeted support and improvement (TS&I) schools. Provide the person(s) responsible, frequency of meetings, how an inventory of resources is maintained, and any problem-solving activities used to determine how to apply resources for the highest impact.

The Differentiated System of Supports structure, which is aligned to Goal 6, Strategy 1: District's Multi-Tiered System of Supports, is detailed in the Problem-Solving section of the DIAP.

VCS has adopted the definition of MTSS to be “a system where resources and supports are aligned along a continuum of intensity, based on academic and behavioral needs, whatever those needs might be.” A central component of the framework involves resource mapping (identifying the resources—both programs and personnel available within the district and at school sites). Data are paramount when linking existing resources and in determining where additional resources are needed.

Collaboration among district departments with principal input results in purposeful coordination of resources and funding sources. The Chief Academic Officer for Instructional Services, the Area Superintendents, the Director of Federal Programs, the Executive Director of K-12 Curriculum, the Director of Exceptional Student Education, and the Coordinator of Educational Enhancements are instrumental in aligning and allocating supplemental funds and personnel to meet the needs of identified schools. District leadership, including directors and coordinators from the Instructional Services division, under the direction of the Chief Academic Officer for Instructional Services, meet as soon as new state or district assessment data are available. The group analyzes the data to prioritize the levels of support for each school by tier. The tier determines the number of and content area focus for instructional coaches and intervention teachers. In addition, the tier determines the intensity of support provided to the school by district personnel.

A team of district level staff is assigned to schools to serve as liaisons to foster communication between each school and the district team and to ensure each school receives timely support to resolve barriers to student achievement. District teams meet weekly for prioritized schools and every two weeks for the second level. At the meetings, each liaison reports on the progress the school is making, shares any concerns about what was observed during site visits, and brings immediate needs or requests for support from the school. Through discussion, the group problem-solves any issue brought to the committee. An appropriate response or plan to seek a resolution is determined during the meeting. Individuals responsible for enacting the plan are identified with an expectation for follow-through and an update at the next meeting.

A spreadsheet developed during the district data analysis reflects all resources allocated to schools from various fund sources. The resource spreadsheet is maintained and adjusted, as needed, in response to the site visits to each of the designated schools and communication with principals throughout the year. In addition, an inventory of intervention resources developed collaboratively and refined to provide recommended standard protocol interventions is utilized by problem solving teams at each school. Schools report satisfaction with the visibility and responsiveness of district staff.

### **District Policies and Practices**

Identify specific policies and practices the LEA shall seek to add, modify, or remove in order to establish or strengthen systems that support school-based leadership teams to implement interventions. Provide the rationale for the proposed changes and the steps required to make the modifications, including person(s) responsible for implementation and follow-up.

Volusia County Schools (VCS) governs the operations of its area schools through School Board policies and negotiated contracts with bargaining units (teacher, support staff, transportation, etc.). The changes planned within the Turnaround Model will not impact School Board policy, but would impact the negotiated contracts of the bargaining units. Thus, Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) would be the vehicle through which VCS would address policy and practice changes in order to strengthen the capacity of school-based leadership teams to implement interventions as needed. The articles under consideration for District Managed Turnaround include Article 10 - Waiver Procedure for Critically Low Performing Schools and Article 15 - Transfer and Vacancies. An analysis of current contract procedures will be conducted in September in order to execute an MOU with signatures by Oct. 31.

The Turnaround Lead will be the person responsible for initiating the process to address policy and practice barriers. Turnaround Lead designees, General Counsel, and union delegates will participate in negotiating desired MOUs immediately upon request from the Turnaround Lead to ensure that required changes are in place as quickly as possible in support of school turnaround needs.

The Turnaround Implementing School will require school-based flexibility that currently is not allowed by contract. In order to implement the proposed changes designed to increase student achievement and educator quality, the following areas of the Volusia United Educators Contract may need to be addressed by MOUs. Similar areas would be addressed as needed in the contracts of American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and Volusia Educational Support Association (VESA). The Turnaround Lead will work with the Chief Human Resources Officer and General Counsel in order to review potential contract articles for potential changes and bring proposed changes to the union president.

Article 5 - Employee Rights

Article 7 - Changes in Past Practices/Terms/Conditions of Employment

Article 8 - Fair Practices

Article 9 - Working Hours and Conditions

Article 14 - Teacher Evaluation

Article 15 - Transfer and Vacancies

Article 19 - Education Support

Article 21 - Teacher Assignment, Travel and Substitutes

Article 35 - Duration of Agreement

### **Operational Flexibility**

Provide the LEA's definition of "operational flexibility" provided to comprehensive support and improvement (CS&I) and targets support and improvement (TS&I) schools to enable full and effective implementation of the school improvement plan (SIP).

Volusia County Schools (VCS) has established guidelines for staffing, scheduling, and budgeting. These guidelines are developed by the appropriate district department and vetted through a review and approval process, which culminates in approval by the superintendent and his leadership team (termed "Cabinet"). As part of the guideline

development process, input is solicited from school-based leadership and teachers. This input is solicited via focus groups, established meetings, and online surveys. When appropriate, guidelines that impact district policy are presented as formal policies for school board approval.

VCS has an operational structure that strongly supports school-based leadership decision-making. District administration is designed in accordance with the servant leadership model. Accordingly, the district provides specific policies and procedures as required by statute and in response to statute; the district also works collaboratively with school leadership to provide school site specific support. The principal of a school is recognized as the expert of the school's needs and, thus, has significant autonomy in the areas of staffing, scheduling, and budgeting.

### **External Partners**

Describe the LEA's rigorous review process to recruit, screen, select, and evaluate any external partners with whom the LEA will partner.

Volusia County Schools follows a specific Vendor Recruitment, Screening, and Selection Process in order to ensure external partnerships of high quality and transparency. VCS follows established policies and procedures to recruit, select and provide oversight to external providers (including charter companies) to ensure quality and hold them accountable for complying with any applicable requirements. VCS looks for external providers who have a successful record of providing support in similar settings.

The VCS Purchasing Department is guided with the goal to promote the district's best interest through professional purchasing processes, which will result in obtaining maximum value for each dollar spent. In order to accomplish that goal, the purchasing function must be carried out uniformly and fairly. In addition, a manual has been established and communicated to ensure that rules and procedures are adhered to at all levels throughout the District.

Board Policy 702 governs purchases made through external partners. See page 9-21 here: <http://myvolusiaschools.org/purchasing/SiteAssets/Pages/Policies/Purchasing%20Manual%202017.pdf>

### **Dissemination**

Provide the methods for dissemination of this application to stakeholders (i.e., students, families, school staff and leadership, and local businesses and organizations) and describe the methods and timelines for reporting student progress, including how communication is provided in a parent-friendly, understandable format, and in multiple languages, if necessary.

Policy 307 (Student Progression Plan) governs the communication processes of our district and ensures that communication is provided in a parent-friendly, understandable, and accessible format. In addition School Advisory Councils and PTAs are a key method of communicating to parents.

Documentation of all notification(s) must be available in the schools. Parent/guardian will be supplied with the following, as applicable:

1. An annual report that indicates the student's progress toward achieving district expectations for proficiency in English Language Arts, science, social studies, and mathematics.
2. Notification at any time during the grading period when there is a significant change in



the student's achievement, effort, and/or conduct.

3. Notification of all statewide, standardized assessments, including all district-developed final exams.

4. Notification in writing to the parent/guardian of any student in K-3 who exhibits a substantial

deficiency in reading of the following:

(1) that his or her child has been identified as having a substantial deficiency in reading;

(2) a description of the current services that are provided to the child;

(3) a description of the proposed supplemental instructional services and supports that will be provided

to the child that are designed to remediate the identified area of reading deficiency;

(4) the student's reading proficiency must be monitored and the intensive instruction must continue

until the student demonstrates grade level proficiency in a manner determined by the district;

that the statewide, standardized ELA assessment is not the sole determiner of promotion;

(5) that if the child's reading deficiency is not remediated by the end of grade 3, the child must be

retained unless he or she is exempted from retention for good cause;

(6) strategies for parents to use in helping their child succeed in reading proficiency;

(7) the district's specific criteria and policies for a portfolio as provided in subparagraph

(6)(b)4. and the

evidence required for a student to demonstrate mastery of Florida's academic standards for English

Language Arts. A parent of a student in grade 3 who is identified anytime during the year as being

at risk of retention may request that the school immediately begin collecting evidence for a portfolio.

School personnel must use all available resources to achieve parent understanding and cooperation

regarding the PMP; and

(8) the district's specific criteria and policies for mid-year promotion. Mid-year promotion means

promotion of a retained student at any time during the year of retention once the student has

demonstrated the ability to read at grade level.

5. Notification in writing of any student who is retained in grade 3 due to a reading deficiency as evidenced

by not scoring Level 2 or above on the grade 3 statewide, standardized ELA assessment, that his or her child

has not met the proficiency level required for promotion and the reasons the child is not eligible for a good

cause exemption as provided in s. 1008.25(6)(b), F.S. The notification must include a description of proposed

interventions and supports that will be provided to the child to remediate the identified areas of reading

deficiency. Provide written notification to the parent/guardian of any student who is retained under the

provisions of paragraph (5)(b) that his or her child has not met the proficiency level required for promotion and

the reasons the child is not eligible for a good cause exemption as provided in paragraph (6)(b). The

notification must comply with the provisions of s.1002.20(15) and must include a description of proposed interventions and supports that will be provided to the child to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency.

6. Notifications associated with ELL students shall be provided as required by law.

7. Notifications associated with Students with Disabilities shall be provided as required bylaw.

8. Notification in writing of the requirements for a standard high school diploma, available designations, and the eligibility requirements for state scholarship programs and postsecondary admissions. Information about diploma designations through an online education and career planning tool will be made available.

9. Annual notification of each student's progress towards achieving state and district expectations for proficiency in English Language Arts, science, social studies, and mathematics, including the student's results on statewide, standardized assessments. The evaluation of each student's progress will be based on the student's classroom work, observations, tests, district and state assessments, and other relevant information. Progress reporting will be provided to the parent/guardian in writing using a format adopted by the district school board.

Parents/Guardians will be provided with tools to regularly monitor student progress and to communicate with teachers.

10. Notification for students in grades 6 through 12 of all graduation options, includingmid-year graduation and required courses.

11. Notification for students enrolled in or entering the Volusia County School District of the opportunities and benefits of the following accelerated programs:

? Advanced Placement

? International Baccalaureate

? Dual Enrollment

? Volusia Virtual School; and/or

? Florida Virtual School

? CAP

12. The opportunity to attend a meeting to inform parents about middle and high school course curriculum.

13. Career opportunities, education requirements associated with each career, educational institutions that prepare students to enter each career, and student financial aid available to pursue postsecondary instruction

required to enter such a career; how to make informed decision about the program of study; and

recommended course work and programs that prepare students for success in their areas of interest and ability.

14. Notification to the parent/guardian of the estimated cost savings for a student who earns an industry certification during high school versus the cost of acquiring such certification after high

school graduation.

15. Notification of any industry certification available to a student.